

# REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS FROM LOCAL POETS

## CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD ARTS DIVISION

### WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY POET LAUREATE 2023-26

#### I SING THE BODY WEST HOLLYWOOD

Lights twinkling, swanky, wrinkled penthouse delirium embedded in cactus hills,  
high heels ablaze, steam from heated motel pools rising to kiss the night air,  
I sing the body West Hollywood where I met my moonlight, my calm, waiting for me  
here all along waltzing the Boulevard lined with fierce boys, transgender trailblazers,  
warrior women, rainbow logos on cop cars, sun glowing through the canyons,  
hugging the curves of Route 66 all before breakfast. West Hollywood you count  
the beats of my heart. Poker nights and speedo-clad future husbands meet in warm  
rooms bet on happily ever-afters, and for the first time I don't feel different. Drinking  
Michelob at the 4Star – Don't Ask Don't Tell – nights you took the trolley home,  
shoe scuffs moist, how did I get from the Sunset Strip to Westwood without losing

My sanity or my clothes, sounds of memories being made to forget outside my  
window, boom, pulse of the city where I come to search for zebras, sift through racks  
of dusty florescent vintage gowns, where everyone I know doesn't fit anywhere  
but here where Pee-Wee Herman threw Tootsie Rolls at the audience at the Roxy,  
body West Hollywood where my voice can be heard, drunk on books, palm trees, art,  
comedy, food, blood of other freaks like me. "I Will Survive." I used to wonder  
why I couldn't find myself then I realized I was never lost -- one city, one pride,  
vogueurs, drag queens piling into the street, swimming through a pool of books  
as David Hockney stands near by with a towel, air lighter here, where Paul  
McCartney stopped traffic at Book Soup happily signing anything handed to him

Departing The Hudson with Michelle, teetering on stilettos, reveling in our fresh  
freedom, 7-Eleven bums gawking as we clear out the entire stock of Lunchables,  
20-somethings cloaked in the velvet glow of the west as the hairy guy rides his bike  
down Santa Monica wearing only a lime green thong, yes, Tower Records my church,  
Gold Coast my karaoke paradise, work is time to play, I feel home, I feel safe, place  
park, hang, tacos years before the big blue whale. Fire at Micky's, poets lines ablaze  
just sayin' I'm reppin' my gayborhood, headlights lining the boulevard like iced lace,  
will always remember when, and can never forget now: Orange Grove, chain-  
smoking with a German I met in Malaysia, flowered pants, manic stocking capped  
dog walkers, I sing the body West Hollywood because it lets me color

Outside the lines, my Russian neighbor is my friend, air sweet with imagination,  
dreams grow on trees, penguins, reindeer, candy and sausage, found a rock  
in Plummer Park a creation living inside, we sing as gas lamps burn . . . there's a fog  
upon L.A. and my friends have lost their way while at the top of my house, the rain is  
loud, sweeps the roof in waves, strong, then soft, then strong. Rain was the  
soundtrack of my life. Where I'm from, it rains. Rain there is like sunshine here. The  
sky would be bright blue, clear all the way to forever, then rain. I loved it. Still do.  
West Hollywood its hills, skinny sidewalks, cafes, seniors, heroes, sightseers,  
freedom seekers, treasures, my city with a small town feel. I sing the body  
West Hollywood: my past, present & future.

our homage to Walt Whitman, is a collaborative  
and visitors to West Hollywood, weaved together  
by Kim Dower: [www.kimdowerpoetry.com](http://www.kimdowerpoetry.com)

For more info on the West Hollywood City Poet  
Laureate program, managed through WeHo Arts,  
please visit: <http://bit.ly/wehocitypoet>



Date Released: January 9, 2023  
Deadline to Apply: April 4, 2023

[weho.org/arts](http://weho.org/arts)

@WeHoArts @WeHoCity

Image: City of West Hollywood Collaborative Poem  
(photograph by Tony Coelho, courtesy of the  
City of West Hollywood)

## INTRODUCTION AND PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of West Hollywood's Arts Division is accepting nominations for its West Hollywood City Poet Laureate program. Poets are asked to self-nominate by the deadline listed above.

The City of West Hollywood City Poet Laureate serves as the official ambassador of West Hollywood's vibrant literary culture, using the position as a platform to both promote poetry in West Hollywood, and promote West Hollywood through the artform of poetry.

The West Hollywood City Poet Laureate will serve for a term of three years from October 2023-October 2026. The first West Hollywood City Poet Laureate, Steven Reigns, served from October 2014-2016. Our second West Hollywood City Poet Laureate, Kim Dower, served from October 2016- 2018. Our third West Hollywood City Poet Laureate, Charles Flowers served from October 2018-2020. Our fourth West Hollywood City Poet Laureate, Brian Sonia-Wallace is serving from October 2020-2023.



For more info on the City Poet Laureate program visit: <http://weho.org/residents/arts-and-culture/literary-arts/city-poet>

The West Hollywood City Poet will be expected to:

- Enhance the presence and appreciation of poetry and the literary arts in West Hollywood;
- Raise awareness of the power of literature, poetry, and spoken word art in West Hollywood;
- Provide educational opportunities for students, adults, and older adults regarding the literary arts;
- Promote partnerships with the West Hollywood Library;
- Provide a forum for "cross pollination" of art forms;
- Inspire an emerging generation of literary artists; and
- Celebrate the spirit and the special qualities of West Hollywood, highlight the City of West Hollywood through the literary arts and, over a period of time, create a new body of literary works that commemorate the diversity and vibrancy of our City.

The City of West Hollywood City Poet Laureate serves for three years and works with the City's Arts Division to carry out the West Hollywood City Poet Laureate duties.

Specific duties for each year include:

- Creating an original poem celebrating West Hollywood, which will be featured on the West Hollywood City website and shared via other means.
- Creating an original poem for the City's annual winter holidays card.
- Contributing to the West Hollywood National Poetry Month program by selecting two poets annually to be honored on street-pole banners to be unveiled during National Poetry Month (April).
- Organizing one yearly panel discussion/reading/writing workshop as part of the City's WeHo Reads Celebrates National Poetry Month program which may have to be an online virtual program. (More info at [www.weho.org/wehoreads](http://www.weho.org/wehoreads))
- Presenting two additional writing workshops or poetry readings which would be presented at a West Hollywood school, the West Hollywood Library, a City Council Meeting, or another City sponsored event such as the WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival, Russian Cultural Festival, Women's History Month, Disabilities Awareness

Month, Black History Month, or any of the numerous other events that take place in the City each year. These programs will need to be pre-approved by Arts Division Staff.

- The activities, as listed above, would be included in scope and provided annual honorarium of the West Hollywood City Poet Laureate program.

## HONORARIUM

The West Hollywood City Poet Laureate receives a \$5,000 honorarium each year. Each year's honorarium will be made in 2 separate payments of \$2,500 based on benchmarks established in an agreement between the City and the West Hollywood City Poet Laureate. This honorarium will be inclusive of any costs incurred by the City Poet Laureate in producing the WeHo Reads Celebrates National Poetry Month event or other events or poetry writing workshops (i.e, paying additional poets to read or speak, purchasing supplies for workshop). A set number of stipends will be covered April Poetry Month event will be covered by the City's WeHo Reads curator/producer. The City will cover the room costs, tech costs, and create promotional materials on behalf of the events.

## APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Poets interested in serving as the West Hollywood City Poet Laureate are asked to self-nominate themselves by completing this online application and submitting it by the deadline.

Applications must be submitted online: <https://bit.ly/wehopoetlaureate23>

Applications are reviewed by the West Hollywood Library Cultural Programming Committee which includes representatives from City of West Hollywood staff and its Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission; the West Hollywood branch of the LA County Public Library; the Friends of the West Hollywood Library; and the current and former West Hollywood City Poet Laureates.

The Library Cultural Programming Committee will forward its recommendation for West

Hollywood City Poet Laureate to the City Council for final approval.

ONLY poets with a significant connection to the City of West Hollywood will be considered. Such connections may be that the poet lives in the City, works in the City, has volunteered on a regular basis for community programs that deliver services in the City, and/or has organized or participated in multiple literary events that were co-sponsored by and/or took place in the City of West Hollywood. Please refer to [www.weho.org/streets](http://www.weho.org/streets) to confirm that your residence, work address and/or the activities in which you took part in are actually in the City of West Hollywood.

Additional criteria the Library Cultural Programming Committee will use to make its selection include:

- The literary excellence of the writer's work, including published work;
- The impact of the poet on other writers and/or on West Hollywood literature;
- The poet's proposed public engagement projects and the ability of the poet to conduct these projects; and
- The broader reputation of the writer and the writer's work locally, regionally, nationally.

## SCHEDULE

The following dates represent the schedule that will be followed. The City reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to adjust this schedule, as it deems necessary. Complete applications must be submitted online by **April 4 at 11am, P.T.**

January 9, 2023	RFQ released
<b>April 4, 2023</b>	<b>Deadline to Apply. RFQ closes</b>
April, 2023	Review of applications.
August, 2023	Orientation/planning meeting with Arts Coordinator. Contracting
October, 2023	City Poet Laureate is sworn in
October, 2026	City Poet Laureate term ends

## CULTURAL EQUITY STATEMENT

The City of West Hollywood's Arts Division and Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission believe that all people in the City of West Hollywood have the right to celebrate and engage in meaningful and relevant arts and cultural experiences. Each member of the community should have access to the arts which reflect and nurture individual identities, affirm personal value, and foster belonging in the community. Arts and culture are foundational to quality of life and vibrant and resilient communities. Arts and culture have the power to enhance inclusion, engagement, and diversity, and contribute to positive outcomes across civic life. The right to participate freely in the cultural life of the community is recognized as a basic human right.

We aspire to ensure cultural equity in all arts policies and practices, including equity for both artists and audiences. West Hollywood has a long history of supporting art that uplifts diverse artists and audiences. To implement the principles of this statement, the Division and Commission will:

- Advocate for equitable outreach and engagement resources to intentionally support and serve diverse populations.
- Actively seek out opportunities to acknowledge past exclusions and change perceptions by being mindful of ways to encourage participation of artists and audiences from groups who have experienced prejudice in the past.
- Reflect on and take action to address and correct any implicit biases that may lead to preferences for one artist or artform over another.
- Provide equity and access through systemic change that will remove barriers, thus improving access, empowerment and representation in the development and distribution of arts policies and resources to diverse communities and individuals.
- Remain accountable through ongoing evaluation and review of the effectiveness of cultural equity practices and procedures and by making public the results of cultural equity audits.

The Arts Division and Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission commit to using this statement to inform policies, partnerships, and programs.

The City of West Hollywood's official definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion (adopted under Admin Reg 118 on July 21, 2021) are:

- **DIVERSITY:** The presence and acknowledgement of differences within a group of people in a given setting that may include race, physical appearance, skin color, hair style, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, mental and physical health status, ethnicity, immigration status, national origin, language, religious identity, parental status, marital status, geography, social class, housing status, or educational status.
- **EQUITY:** The act of developing and advancing fair and just outcomes in systems, procedures, practices, policies, and distribution of resources to minimize harm and create equitable opportunity and advancement for all people. Equity is distinct from



equality, which refers to everyone receiving the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equity is viewed from three perspectives: individual, institutional, and structural. Equitable outcomes focus on identifying, understanding, and eliminating the root harm, biases, disadvantages, and barriers that prevent the full participation of historically and currently oppressed individuals and groups.

- **INCLUSION:** The act of creating environments in which any individual, group, or community can fully participate in the decision-making processes and be welcomed, respected, supported, and valued. Inclusion is not a natural consequence of diversity. An inclusive climate embraces differences and offers respect and prospects for growth in words, actions, and preparations to meet all people where they are. It is created through progressive and consistent actions to expand, include, and share.

\*\*The Arts Division and Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission understand that implementing art and funding programs can raise complicated legal issues and consultation with the City Attorney's office may be necessary before making final decisions based on this statement.

## CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD

The City of West Hollywood, known as the "Creative City," was incorporated in 1984. It is 1.9 square miles in area and is bounded by Beverly Hills to the west, Hollywood to the east, and Los Angeles to the north and south. West Hollywood serves many diverse communities and cultural traditions. Its audiences include older immigrants from repressive political environments, children, families, singles and a large LGBTQ population.

The City is home to approximately 37,000 residents and over 3,500 businesses. Approximately 40% of the City's residents identify as LGBTQ, 10% are Russian-speaking immigrants, and close to 20% are senior citizens.

The City of West Hollywood delivers a broad array of arts programs including: Art on the Outside (temporary public art), Summer Sounds, Winter Sounds, WeHo Reads, Free Theatre in the Parks, Arts Grants for Nonprofit Arts Organizations, Library Exhibits and Programming, WeHo Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival (formerly called the One City One Pride LGBTQ Arts Festival), and Urban Art Program (permanent public art). [@wehoarts](http://www.weho.org/arts)

For more information on other Arts Division programs, please visit [www.weho.org/arts](http://www.weho.org/arts) and follow us on social media at [www.facebook.com/WeHoArts](http://www.facebook.com/WeHoArts) and [www.twitter.com/WeHoArts](http://www.twitter.com/WeHoArts).

## QUESTIONS

For all questions related to this RFQ contact Mike Che, Arts Coordinator, [mche@weho.org](mailto:mche@weho.org) or 323-848-6377

*The City of West Hollywood reserves the right to cancel or postpone this RFQ at any time.*



*Image: Kim Dower reading at the 2017 event Sunset Strip through the Eyes of Poets  
(photograph by Tony Coelho, courtesy of the  
City of West Hollywood)*